

Amendments to the Claims:

Claims 1-3 (Cancelled)

4. (New) An auto-tensioner for engine accessories, comprising:

a cylinder having an open top end;

a sleeve having a bottom and inserted in said cylinder;

a seal member mounted to said cylinder at said open top end thereof to prevent leakage of hydraulic oil in said cylinder;

a rod slidably extending through said seal member;

a plunger connected to a bottom end of said rod so as to be slidable in said sleeve along an axial direction, said plunger defining a pressure chamber below said plunger in said cylinder, and said plunger defining a reservoir chamber above said plunger in said cylinder such that, with hydraulic oil present in said reservoir chamber, an air gap is present in said reservoir chamber between the hydraulic oil and said seal member, said plunger having a passage through which said pressure chamber communicates with said reservoir chamber;

a check valve provided at said passage to close said passage when a pressure in said pressure chamber exceeds a pressure in said reservoir chamber; and

a return spring mounted around said cylinder to bias said rod outwardly of said cylinder;

wherein a minute oil leak gap is formed between sliding surfaces of said sleeve and said plunger such that hydraulic oil can flow from said pressure chamber into said reservoir chamber via said minute oil leak gap, said minute oil leak gap having a cross-sectional area, in a cross section perpendicular to the axial direction, substantially smaller than a cross-sectional area, in a cross section perpendicular to the axial direction, of said passage;

wherein a return chamber is defined under said sleeve so as to communicate with said reservoir chamber, said bottom of said sleeve being formed with a valve hole through which said return chamber communicates with said pressure chamber; and

wherein a relief valve is provided at said valve hole to open said valve hole if the pressure in said pressure chamber exceeds a set pressure.

5. **(New)** An auto-tensioner according to claim 4, wherein said return chamber communicates with said reservoir chamber through at least one axial groove formed in a surface between said sleeve and said cylinder.
6. **(New)** An auto-tensioner according to claim 5, wherein the surface in which said at least one axial groove is formed is an outer peripheral surface of said sleeve.
7. **(New)** An auto-tensioner according to claim 4, wherein said seal member is interposed radially between said rod and said cylinder so as to seal a radial gap between said rod and said cylinder.